

Protestors Mourn Ürümqi fire victims in Chinatown

Hannah Nguyen
Beacon Staff

Disclaimer: names were omitted to protect the identity of sources.

Hundreds gathered near the Tiananmen Memorial in Boston’s Chinatown last Friday for a candlelight vigil to honor the victims of the Ürümqi fire on Nov. 24.

The vigil is one of hundreds happening in China and other countries to protest China’s zero-COVID policy after a fire in a high-rise apartment in Ürümqi, the capital of Xinjiang—also known as East Turkestan—killed 10 people, including at least three children, according to Chinese state media.

China’s zero-COVID policy, or “dynamic zero-COVID,” is a policy strongly backed by President Xi Jinping for over two years in his effort to control COVID infections. Under this policy, those who test positive for COVID or have come in contact with those infected will undergo lockdowns, quarantines, and testing. While



Courtesy Arthur Mansavage

the policy has kept infections and deaths low, it has disrupted life for millions. As of Wednesday, the Chinese government broadly eased zero-COVID restrictions after the surge of protests.

Posts on Chinese social media blamed the strict COVID-19 policies for the deaths. At the time of the fire, residents had been under tight COVID restrictions for more than 100 days and were blocked from leaving their homes.

After vigils and protests erupted in Shanghai, anonymous organizers of the Boston Stands With Ürümqi demonstration created a Telegram group to organize one within the city. The vigil served as an opportunity for the Chinese community in Boston to practice its freedom of expression and assembly, the organizers said.

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Little Building embraces Earthshot awards with projection series

Chloe Els
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Boston hosted the Earthshot Prize Awards on Friday, celebrating the innovators fighting climate change on an international scale.

In anticipation of the ceremony, Emerson projected a series of images promoting Earthshot across the Boylston Street side of the Little Building—one of three buildings on which the Earthshot marketing team chose to display projections, along with the John F. Kennedy Library and Faneuil Hall.

The marketing team chose the Little Building because of its “history with producing large scale digital projections on the Little Building,” Senior Director of Strategic Communications and Media Relations Michelle Gaseau wrote in a written response to The Beacon.

Additionally, David Howse, the executive director of ArtsEmerson, served as a member of the host committee for the Earthshot Awards and led initiatives in the collaboration between the Earthshot committee and

the JFK Library Foundation.

“Mayor Wu’s selection of ArtsEmerson to serve on the Earthshot Prize Host Committee was special because it was a clear recognition of the power the arts have to inspire meaningful change,” Howse wrote in a written statement to The Beacon.

“This year’s prize ceremony represents a local, national, and global event that will help initiate change to promote a healthier planet. Emerson’s part in this project reflects the college’s commitment to both the community and the city,” Gilligan wrote in the initial announcement of the college’s involvement with the Earthshot awards two weeks ago.

Emerson is working to reach carbon neutrality by 2030. Since 2007, it has decreased net carbon emissions by 27% and transitioned all electrical operations to 100% green power, according to the Emerson College sustainability services website. Despite this progress, the college acknowledges the need for further improvement.

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‘The Five Fingers of a Dog’: Emerson students debut horror short film

Ryan Yau
Beacon Staff

No filmmakers have been bold enough to suggest dogs have fingers. Classical thought considers dogs’ forelimbs to be legs, making the phalanges on their paws “toes.”

None until Charlie Compton and Justin Landsman, junior visual and media arts majors who co-directed and wrote their debut short film “The Five Fingers of a Dog.”

The film is currently making the rounds in its festival run. On Dec. 10, it will be screened virtually for Shockfest Film Festival. On Jan. 21, it will open for “What Have You Done to Solange?” at the Coolidge Corner Theatre for Cinematic Void’s January Giallo series.

They eventually plan to release the film on streaming platforms as well as physical media.

Compton and Landsman met during their first year at Emerson and quickly became friends due to their shared interest in horror—specifically, giallo.

Giallo is an Italian horror subgenre that incorporates murder mystery and psychological thriller elements, typified by black-gloved killers, exaggerated gore, insane soundtracks, and 11th-hour murderer reveals. It combines schlock sensibilities and subpar writing with arthouse visual style, and that central contradiction is its mystique.

The subgenre was most popular in the 70s, and production of giallo movies has since declined. But its influence lives on—giallo is notable as a major inspiration for the ubiquitous slasher subgenre, as well as on “The Five Fingers of a Dog.”

“Going into our sophomore

year, [Charlie and I] knew we wanted to make something together,” Landsman said. “Giallo was brought up in most of our conversations because we love that subgenre so much. It got to the point where we were just like, ‘Let’s make one.’”

The duo has described the film as a neo-giallo infused with gothic and cosmic horror elements.

The film is a phantasmagoria of bloody murder scenarios, committed by a faceless, shapeless killer. A narrative thread loosely follows an unnamed detective—played by junior performing arts major Qinshi Meng—as he attempts to make sense of the killings around town.

Not a particularly diligent detective—while still on the job, he makes out with a polaroid portrait for so long he starts autoerotically asphyxiating. The directors found the scene especially fun to shoot.

“It was a five-minute-long take,” Compton said. “Our crew was all there to watch and their jaws were dropped the entire time. It was pretty unbelievable.”

The plot as presented is too fragmented to properly relay—narrative wasn’t a focus when writing the film.

Within a 20-minute runtime, they wouldn’t be able to flesh out the particulars of a compelling murder mystery. Thus, they opted to replicate the feeling rather than the logic of tracking a killer—the result is a film driven more by emotion than story.

“It’s not so much about trying to find out who it is, but more the aesthetic of

Five fingers, pg. 6



Graduate guard Jarred Houston makes a layup / Beacon Archives

Men’s basketball defeats Worcester State 80-72 for second straight win

Jordan Pagkalinawan
Beacon Staff

Fresh off a dominant win over Plymouth State, the Lions continued the momentum with an 80-72 win over the Worcester State Lancers at the Bobbi Brown & Steven Plofker Gym this past Dec. 3.

The Lions won the opening tip and were soon in a back-and-forth with the Lancers. After two straight blocks and a defensive rebound from graduate student Jarred Houston, senior guard James Beckwith stole the ball and made a layup that gave the Lions a 8-4 lead with 16:30 remaining in the first half.

Worcester eventually closed the gap, taking a 13-12 lead off a four-point play. The Lions quickly reclaimed the game eight seconds later thanks to a three-pointer from Brendan McNamara. Ten gritty minutes of play later, the Lions were up 36-27 with 3:34 remaining in the first half, but the Lancers weren’t backing down and stormed back to just one point, 38-37.

The Lions were aggressive from the jump, shooting 44% from the field. They also had eight assists, eight points off of Worcester turnovers, 11 defen-

sive rebounds and six blocks—all of the latter courtesy of Houston.

The Lancers started the second half with the ball, sinking two free throws off a foul from Houston to take a 39-38 lead. The Lions missed their first three three-point attempts of the half, going 2-13 from deep with 17 minutes left. Senior forward Ben Allen made two free throws with 16:35 left to cut Worcester’s lead to one. Following a Lancers layup, McNamara buried a triple with 15:30 left to tie the game at 43.

An Allen steal led to a Beckwith jumper that gave Emerson the lead, inspiring a 9-2 run including a Beckwith three from the NEWMAC logo with 13:30 left. Worcester completed a three-point play with 12:34 to go, and Coman buried a corner three in response.

Houston signed, sealed, and delivered a poster jam with 12 minutes left off of a no-look dime from Beckwith. The Lions led 59-50 and continued to maintain their double-digit lead. Houston’s putback layup gave him 19 points while McNamara and Worcester went

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News

Meet David Stewart: Emerson’s new media studies affiliate professor

Maeve Lawler
Beacon Staff

David Stewart will join Emerson’s Visual Media Arts department as an affiliate professor of film and media studies in the Spring 2023 semester. He will teach two courses—Approaches in Media Studies and Media Histories—designed for first-year students.

Having taught media and cultural studies since 2017 as an adjunct lecturer at Plymouth State University, Stewart brings his teaching experience and passion for film into Emerson’s programs.

“I just love the energy I get from my students responding to a given



Courtesy David Stewart

piece of film or an article they’ve never seen before,” he said.

Stewart will be a part of the VMA department’s recently-launched Foundations Program for VMA students. This program demands more course sections and a lower instructor-to-student ratio, said VMA department associate chair and associate professor Jun Okada in an email statement to The Beacon. These requirements prompted the department to hire new affiliate faculty to teach these courses.

A typical classroom environment for Stewart fosters enthusiasm for non-mainstream media. He finds value in teaching films outside popular streaming platforms, pointing to the silent short film “Un Chien Andalou” by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí as an example. By highlighting under-the-radar media, Stewart hopes to engage students and stem interest in different aspects of film for those unsure about their focus while attending Emerson and after graduation.

Student enthusiasm, he added, is a “propeller” that inspires him each morning.

“It’s much better than coffee, just having a bunch of students excitedly talking about what they saw on television last night to what they read for this week’s class or the next week’s class,” Stewart said. “It’s that buzz of energy. It’s really something I love working

off of.”

Okada is confident Stewart will reciprocate students’ enthusiasm in his teaching.

“David will offer a lot to our first-year students... including his knowledge, passion, and energy,” Okada wrote. “I hope he will continue with us in semesters to come.”

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Media Studies from Plymouth State in 2011, Stewart moved to San Francisco and worked as a residential advisor at Archbishop Riordan High School. On his days off, he worked as an extra on movie sets or volunteered to work on documentary films. In 2015, he attended DePaul University in Chicago to receive his master’s degree in Film, Cinema, and Video Studies.

“Being in these major film-based cities, like San Francisco and Chicago, enlightened my experiences of what I want to do in terms of teaching film studies,” Stewart said.

His time in both cities also drove his interest in journalism, which began on Cape Cod, MA—where he grew up. At 18 years old, Stewart freelanced for The Barnstable Patriot, where he covered everything from theater productions to town hall meetings. He continued to freelance with other publications, including the Chicago Reader, PleaseKillMe.com, DMovies, and the Film Stage, with a focus on

arts and entertainment.

Stewart’s interest in film started when he was a child. Having grown up watching history unfold on television, he described it as something that was “always there” and was fascinated by society’s interpretations of the world through film.

“I was passionate about... how [film and music] managed to spark interest or controversy, that really propels audiences to think about film not [just] as an entertainment factor [but] also as a social commentary,” Stewart said.

This passion set Stewart apart from other candidates who applied for the position.

“When I interviewed David, he stood out as being extremely enthusiastic about cinema and especially the importance of diversity in media,” Okada wrote. “His references were glowing in terms of his success with students also.”

When Stewart saw Emerson was looking to hire in the VMA department, he felt an impulse to jump on the opportunity, viewing Emerson as a hub for creative success.

“Emerson really has been, in so many respects, the seed for so many creative entities that have since departed from Emerson,” Stewart said, citing writer David Foster Wallace—who taught at Emerson in 1991—as an example.

After speaking with members of the VMA department, Stewart believes his teaching approach aligns

with those of the college. He said he knew he wanted to be part of the program after talking with students and colleagues.

“[It’s] the shared understanding of making sure a student’s education is not watered down by canonical texts, but enlightening and inspiring pieces of film and media,” he said.

Before starting at Emerson, Stewart will finish the first draft of a biography on Robert Jonathan Demme—one of his favorite filmmakers—who died in 2017. He aims for the book, titled “The Life and Work and Jonathan Demme,” to be published in early 2024, around the time of what would have been Demme’s 80th birthday.

“In light of all the political and cultural challenges of the last few years, I hope my readers will go out and see [his] movies for the first time or revisit them to appreciate who he was and what he meant for a generation of filmmakers and film scholars like myself,” Stewart said.

Stewart said he’s excited to work with students in a passionate, film-focused environment.

“I’m really excited by the prospect of being on Emerson’s campus and really taking in the energy from the students in the classroom,” he said.

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Boston stands with Ürümqi

Cont. from Pg. 1

“It would also be a great opportunity to display the bravery and the freedom-loving spirits of the Chinese diaspora community, as we were sometimes painted as



Hundreds gather around a speaker at the vigil. / Photo Arthur Mansavage

‘apathetic about social justice’ or ‘brainwashed by propaganda,’” the organizers said in an email to The Beacon.

The protest criticized the Chinese government’s treatment of Uyghurs—an ethnic minority in Xinjiang—as many of the victims in the fire were Uyghurs. Protestors and other human rights groups have long accused China for placing more than one million Uyghurs in “re-education camps” and subjecting many to sterilization and other human rights violations.

“We thought that it was crucial to form a vigil to mourn the loss of the victims and provide a

safe communication space between the Uyghur community and the mainlanders, where the

Uyghurs could talk about the oppression they and their families have faced from the Chinese

for many mainland Chinese people who may have not been aware of the allegations against China, according to the organizers.

“I saw [the vigil] as a great opportunity for me to join the force and join the movement to push the momentum,” said a protestor who is originally from China.

Knowing English and having access to foreign media, he continued, makes him more privileged to mainlanders because he can read the accusations that would have otherwise been censored in China—as China has denied these allegations.

“I think we are [mainlanders’] only source of information to truth and so I want to encourage them to never stop talking and to not be discouraged because there are like-minded people out there, like we can see today,” he said. “When they are frustrated, know that that’s normal too because whatever has been going on, it’s been so long and not much has changed.”

Silence and inaction is “an appeasement and an endorsement to tyranny,” a protestor said, as more people learn about Uyghur struggles.

“We must break our silence. We must stand in solidarity. We must echo their bravery with our own,” a protestor said.

They added that those in solidarity should not just send prayers from afar but take action.

“We cannot stop fighting until we have the rule of law, until the day when the Constitution isn’t just a sketchbook for a dictator to scribble on,” they said.



A person kneeling as they light a candle. / Photo Arthur Mansavage

Some protestors even called for the Chinese Communist Party and Jinping to step down.

“Even if the zero-COVID policy ends, as long as the party remains in power, those tragedies will be repeated,” a speaker said.

Due to safety concerns, attendees were encouraged to maintain anonymity. Many dressed in black and wore masks, hats, and sunglasses to protect themselves and their families in China from governmental retaliation.

“Even though people still had to wear masks to keep anonymous during the vigil, it’s a great leap from having no public forum at all,” the organizers said.

Volunteers of the organization urge the Chinese authorities to allow public mourning for the victims in the Urumqi Fire, end the zero-Covid policy in China, release arrested protestors and activists, respect human rights,

and abolish concentration camps in Xinjiang.

“The first four demands have been making the rounds among the Chinese diaspora all over the world, all of which were directly speaking to the Urumqi fire and the zero-Covid policy,” they said. “We wanted to give the world a clear and unified message, that we urge the Chinese government to respect science, the rule of law, and human rights.”

The vigil in Chinatown is one of several in Massachusetts since Nov. 24, including vigils at Faneuil Hall in Boston and Harvard Square in Cambridge last week.

“We sincerely hope people with different ideas can find a common ground through the event,” the organizers said. “Real change could only happen when

Emerson students, St. Anthony's Shine partner to amplify underrepresented voices

Ashlyn Wang
Beacon Staff

Ava Straccia stopped in front of a poster station in the Boston Common, listening to a woman detail her experience of homelessness and mental health struggles. This story was among 22 other anonymous submis-

sions detailed at Tuesday's "Listen to Me! Stories of the Unnoticed." "She had no home, she had no body, and she was just on the streets, getting involved in drugs," the senior visual media arts major recalled. "She had people steal things from her. She got pregnant, she was in prison again, she had her baby in prison, and then the baby was taken away." The event, organized by St. Anthony Shrine with the help of Emerson faculty and students, brought narratives collected from people experiencing homelessness, struggling with mental health challenges, and members of the LGBTQ+ community to the public in hopes of raising awareness of marginalized voices



Conway and Emerson students stand together. / Photo Arthur Mansavage

the 15 undergraduate sophomores, juniors, and seniors proposed various ideas to the shrine and came up with the project together. Students were involved in three main aspects of the event: press release, social media, and event preparation, and were divided into teams responsible for pitching to the media, promoting the event by creating social media posts, and planning the venue. Scott said many people do not approach the unhoused community and hear their stories. "That's what I'm hoping the big takeaway here is," she said, "just please stop and start to listen." Junior public relations and mar-

keting communications double major Ananya Dutta, who served on the events team, said the group worked on the project all semester. "We felt like we were really doing something right," she said. "Even when we're frustrated because we have to stay late and work on [it]... we're all so grateful that we get to work on this opportunity." Dutta edited the audio, and after listening to the collected stories many times, she felt grateful for her own position. "Listening to that in my warm apartment with a roof over my head," Dutta said. "Even though I was so stressed with finals and everything, this does make me appreciate what I have." St. Anthony Shrine and Emerson students collected the stories through taped interviews, phone lines, and written work. According to Dutta, each student was asked to collect at least two stories. Dai Mingqian, a junior public relations major, collected a story from her friend who suffers from bipolar disorder and struggles with her mental health issues with the companionship, support, and encouragement of her friends. Ashley Gonzalez, a first-year graduate student in Boston College's Master of Social Work program, was drawn to the event while passing by on a walk with a friend. "These are things that we need to shed more light on," Gonzalez said. "I think this was a very engaging way in bringing light to what's really going on, of these populations not being served the correct recognition or help that they actually need to thrive." Jonathan Pantalone was immediately drawn to the event on the way home. Pantalone identifies as bisexual and struggles with mental health challenges and resonated with the stories.

"I think it's really helpful because it's just so sad, especially today, it's bigger than ever," said Pantalone. "I feel like students today... don't have time to focus on their mental health, themselves, or focus on what's important outside of school." Pantalone said these stories should be more widely known and suggested the student team display the event at train stations, where more people—especially medical professionals, would pass by. "I don't think enough people understand," Pantalone said. The Rev. Thomas Conway, executive director of St. Anthony Shrine, made a speech in front of a poster station around 3:30 p.m. "We walk past unhoused community members every day," he said.

great opportunity for people to know nonprofit organizations are working together to improve the community. "What we're hoping to get out of this is to create empathy and sympathy with the general public," Conway said in an interview with The Beacon. "You can tell this is stuff that's of the heart and that people are greatly touched by being able to tell their story." Straccia reflected on the stories she heard and watched with delight as people "put in the effort" to scan the codes to listen to more stories. "The stories end abruptly because this is real life," she said. "This is not something that you can just casually walk through and say that you experience it." Dutta believes the most important



Conway addresses the Common. / Photo Arthur Mansavage

"We sometimes underestimate the struggles of those with mental health challenges and choose to ignore the issues of the members of the LGBTQ community... Our hope is that this is just the start, and we can continue to collect and share these stories." Conway believes the event was a

thing about the event was its amplification of untold stories. "Your story is important," Dutta said. "We hear you, we want to help you, and there are programs that can help you."

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Boston hosts second-ever Earthshot prize

Cont. from Pg. 1

The Prince and Princess of Wales arrived in Boston for their first trip to the U.S. since 2014 this Wednesday, and were welcomed by Boston Mayor Michelle Wu in a public event on the newly renovated City Hall Plaza. "We are thrilled to have the great honor of hosting this year's Earthshot awards to advance that same galvanizing commitment to the urgent action necessary to solve climate change and repair our planet," Mayor Wu said as she welcomed the royal couple to Boston. The first Earthshot awards ceremony was hosted in London, 2021, making Boston the first American city to host the awards.



The crowd gathered for the City Hall address. / Photo Chloe Els

Following Mayor Wu's speech, Prince William commended her for keeping climate policies as a central issue of her administration. One of Wu's main goals as mayor is to bring the Green New Deal to Boston to establish a green economy and enact climate justice. This is one of many reasons Prince William chose to bring the Earthshot Awards to Boston. President John F. Kennedy's 1962 "Moonshot" challenge to put a man on the moon in 10 years inspired him to establish Earthshot, which aims to repair the planet within a decade with particular focus on ending climate change. "Sixty years ago, President John F. Kennedy's Moonshot speech laid down a challenge to American innovation and ingenuity," the

Prince of Wales said, addressing City Hall. "Like President Kennedy, Catherine and I firmly believe that we all have it within us to achieve great things and that human beings have the ability to lead, innovate, and problem solve." The Earthshot Prize has five goals: to protect and restore nature, to clean our air, to revive our oceans, to build a waste free world, and to fix our climate. These goals correspond to the five categories of Earthshot winners, who were announced at the Friday award ceremony held at MGM Music Hall. Indian startup Kheyti won the "Protect and Restore Nature" category for its product called Greenhouse-in-a-Box for small-hold farmers to decrease the amount of water and pesticides needed to

grow crops. The winner of the "Clean Our Air" category was Kenyan company Mukuru Clean Stoves, which invented stoves that burn processed biomass. Biomass releases fewer air pollutants than an open flame or traditional stove, making it a better alternative to wood or coal. Indigenous Women of the Great Barrier Reef, an Australia-based company, won the "Revive Our Oceans" category for its work training Indigenous women rangers to defend the Great Barrier Reef from climate change. Notpla, a company in the United Kingdom, won the "Build a Waste-Free World" category. Notpla turns seaweed and plant matter into a biodegradable material that can be used as an alternative to plastic.

The winner of the "Fix Our Climate" category was 44.01 from Oman, in the Middle East. This company mineralizes carbon dioxide in peridotite which permanently removes it from the atmosphere. Each winner was awarded \$1.2 million to support the continuation of their work. A group called the Global Alliance Founding Partners provide funding for the award. Some of the members include the Bezos Earth Fund, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and Colman Family Ventures. While the winners of the Earthshot Prize were not in attendance, famous performers like Billie Eilish, Rami Malek, and Shailene Woodley filled the MGM Music Hall and walked the green carpet. At both the mayoral welcome on Wednesday and the award show on Friday, people waited outside for hours, hoping to catch a glimpse of a royal or celebrity.



Maura Healey. / Photo Campbell Parish



Prince William. / Photo Campbell Parish

Climate activist Reverend Mariama White-Hammond commented on the star power of the Earthshot awards as she helped welcome the Prince and Princess of Wales to Boston on Wednesday. "We're all here to see the big guests of the night," she said in a speech at City Hall. "But in the midst of it all, I hope we remember that all eight billion of us... we're fighting for each other and to save all of our lives."

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Opinion

In a biological perspective, Tumblr’s Goncharov is a masterpiece

Rachel Choi
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Tumblr’s newest hot topic revolves around Martin Scorsese’s 1973 film “Goncharov,” which Tumblr users are deeming the best mafia film ever made, with its intricately-woven storylines coupled with heartbreaking moments of both love and betrayal.

The story follows a man named Goncharov—originally a discothèque manager who turned into a notorious Russian hitman—who returns to Naples, Italy to finish what he has started. The movie is ripe with interesting plot points, love triangles, homoerotic relationships, memorable shots like the iconic bridge scene, and other hitmen—like the fan-favorite Joe “Ice Pick Joe” Morelli—out to get Goncharov. Except, there’s a little twist to this movie: it doesn’t exist.

The best mafia film of all time that does not exist is completely fabricated by Tumblarians—Tumblrs? Tumblrons?—and although the surge of fans reevaluating the mythical movie started in November 2022, the origins of “Goncharov” showed its face on April 21, 2020. Tumblr user zootycoon posted a picture of the tag on a pair of boots, reading “THE GREATEST MAFIA MOVIE EVER MADE, MARTIN SCORSESE PRESENTS, GONCHAROV.” Zootycoon expressed understandable confusion at the tag promoting a nonexistent movie, prompting a response by user abandonedambition who replied, “this idiot hasn’t seen goncharov.”

This exchange was reposted a year later, and somehow it got to user beelzebub, who made a fake poster for it just this November—and the rest is history. While Tumblr was giggling and gagging, everyone outside of that godforsaken hellhole was asking, “What?” and “Why?”

The simple answer is “Goncharov” is an example of a meme, a channel for culturally relevant ideas, topics, and conversations to be shared amongst individuals. Tumblr’s work ethic of pumping out stunningly beautiful artwork of “Gon-

charov,” or the sheer amount of effort people are putting in to keep this meme going is an example of how a meme will usually cycle until its internet life hits a peak. That raises a whole new question of why memes are even a thing.

Memes have an odd quality to them; memes that survive on the internet in the long term are the memes that have somehow stuck with the public. The survivors then replicate almost like a form of natural selection. The confusing nature of memes can be understood through one of the most left-field explanations yet: memes are best defined through a biological lens.

Memes have been around long before the internet had a term for the phenomenon. Evolutionary biologist Richards Dawkins first coined the term in his book “The Selfish Gene” published in 1976. Dawkins stated that he needed a word to fully encapsulate the idea of cultural transmission, and used a combination of the Greek “mimeme,” which means something that is imitated, and the word “gene” to create the word fondly known as “meme.” Of course, like all things, the meaning of the word “meme” evolved throughout generations. Nowadays, a meme is a piece of media—usually in a humorous manner—that is shared and replicated to deliver a certain topic, whether it be social, political, and cultural to the masses.

Yet, in an interesting turn of events, to understand the why behind memes and not just the how, we need to look into biology. Memes on a fundamental basis are just ideas—ideas that are transmitted, almost like a virus, and also replicated, like a gene. Parisian biologist Jacques Monod put it best when he compared this concept of ideas to mRNA: “Ideas have retained some of the properties of organisms ... they tend to perpetuate their structure and to breed; they too can fuse, recombine, segregate their content; indeed they too can evolve, and in this evolution selection must surely play an important role.” To Monod, ideas were seemingly akin to an actual biological lifeform, able to shift and change and evolve.

Like religious ideology swaying a large group of people, or some random tag on a pair of boots online sparking an entire website to go absolutely bonkers, ideas can combine, branch off, and evolve into something greater. Dawkins hopped onto

urial selection are able to self-replicate and evolve, propagating far and wide. Dawkins said that memes were propagated from brain to brain through a process similar to imitation. Subsequently, it came to be understood that memes oc-

high-speed connection across person to person has bolstered the speed at which memes evolve. Ideas are spread through memes, and memes are no longer word-of-mouth. They’re at the average person’s fingertips, sprawled across shitty advertisements, played over and over again at the mall, plastered on dorm bathrooms, and left on billboards to be showcased. New information on the latest internet trends go viral—a term coined through comparing memes to viral infections—and are shared within seconds across millions.

Memes aren’t tethered to the earth like biological organisms are. Much like organisms have evolved to exploit information they encounter to survive, memes have done the same; by exploiting any brain they come across to survive.

As such, the entire situation with “Goncharov” isn’t just a silly little goofy moment made by Tumblr’s girly pop community, but affirmation of both Monod and Dawkins’ theories. It’s a striking example of how a bit of information has latched onto a few brains and replicated across the invisible infosphere—an environment inhabited by informational entities.

It’s gathered the necessary resources of brain time and memory, and has survived to reproduce and create new versions of itself. “Goncharov” is a biological mutation, the Frankenstein of memes, and it’s fascinating to see how the highkey-wild take on the eerily biological aspects of memeification come to fruition.

“Goncharov” is the best mafia film ever made because it’s the culmination of human evolution and the magnum opus of the biological processes of the transmission of information. It’s the perfect meme, and once it dies out through natural selection, another meme will take its place to fill a spot on Tumblr’s dossier.

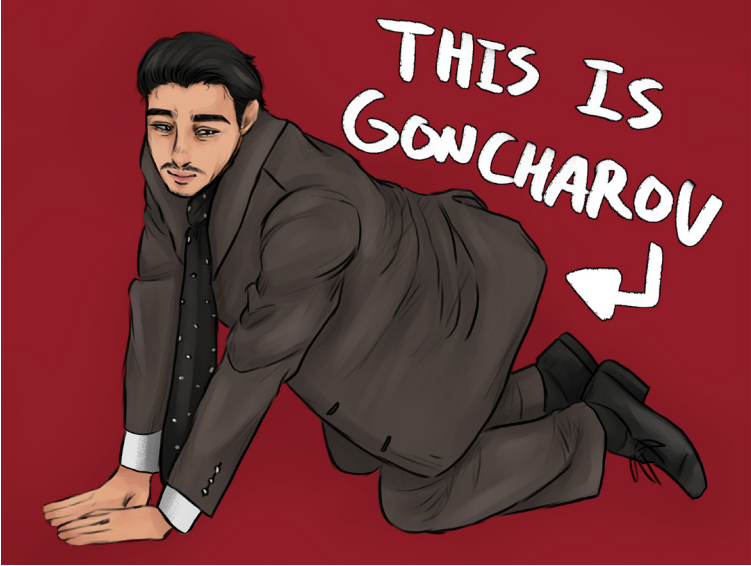


Illustration Rachel Choi

this vein of a biological explanation to the phenomenon of ideas seemingly evolving. He explained that where there is life, there is evolution, and evolution is made possible thanks to replicators—things that replicate—and that in biology, replicators were genetically based like nucleic acid.

However, Dawkins noted that there was a “new kind of replicator” that had “recently emerged on this very plant,” one that was non-chemically based. These replicators used language as transmission, and the brain was its “spawning ground.” He called these bodiless replicators “memes,” and thus the “meme” was born.

Memes undergo processes of biological life cycles. They compete with one another for resources, like brain time, memorability, and attention, and the weaker die off while the strong survive, not unlike natural selection. The survivors of nat-

curred long before language was created.

Memes are, at their most basic state, ideas that have been built upon by different external factors to change and grow. Ideas don’t need to be spread by word-of-mouth, they can be spread by action. Examples could be seen in primitive humans mimicking each other to learn to create fire, or songbirds learning their own songs by replicating the sound of nearby songbirds—the transmission of ideas has been an ongoing cycle since the beginning of time. Philosopher Fred Dretske wrote in 1981 that, “In the beginning there was information. The word came later.” Language was just something that helped understand this phenomenon; a tool that carried the evolution of this form of communication into the modern day colloquialism.

Modern methods of communication technology have allowed for a global connectivity unlike anything before. This

Prioritize aftercare as much as your orgasm

Mariyam Quaisar
Beacon Staff

What do you do after having sex? Cuddle with your partner, turn away and take a nap, or worse, wipe the remnants and just scroll on your phone? The emotional aftercare that takes place after sex dictates the lasting tone of the entire experience.

Aftercare is a term that originally comes from the kink community—namely those who practice BDSM—but in reality applies to everyone who engages in sexual relations. Peoples’ hormones can go mayhem after intimate and/or intense experiences. Adrenaline, dopamine, and oxytocin—hormones that skyrocket during sex—drop just as quickly as they rise, and if that drop is not attended, it can result in feelings of anxiety or shame.

Sexual intimacy doesn’t end when all (yes, all) people orgasm—what happens after sex is as crucial as the act of sex itself because of the weight of the subsequent emotions. You can feel energized or drained, sad or happy, satisfied or unsatisfied (bummer). Many people feel vulnerable after doing the deed, and emotional aftercare is essential to regulate sensual sensations so neither party feels used or ignored.

It is natural to feel a range of emotions after sex—especially those referred to as post-coital blues. Oftentimes, people have a truly amazing orgasm then feel sad for what seems like no reason. Post-coital dysphoria comes from the euphoric rush and sudden comedown that



Illustration Rachel Choi

follows sexual pleasure, and while it is unavoidable, that does not mean it should not be addressed. Think of aftercare as the soothing balm for these sad feelings.

This practice of emotional aftercare comes in a variety of forms because every person has their own preferences. While one person may prefer cuddles and kisses, another’s may be a relaxing cup of tea or talking through things that went well—positive reinforcement. Regardless of what type of aftercare you choose, there is an unspoken reassurance that no one is being taken for granted and that the intimacy did not end when the sex did.

People often assume foreplay and

sex are the main contenders for sexual satisfaction, but the second bookend of sex—aftercare—is actually proven to be the most important. According to a study published in the “Archives of Sexual Behavior,” conducted by researchers at uni-

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versities in Toronto, people who spend more time on “post-sex affection” are more sexually satisfied and more satisfied with their relationship.

Engaging in things like cuddling is a positive post-sex reward, which can make your partner feel good and reassured that they are not just another stop on your sex train.

Understanding your partner’s needs after an amazing time in the sheets can only be known by—you guessed it—communication. Talk to your partner to recognize and address what aftercare means to them so everyone involved can feel satisfied beyond having an orgasm. When aftercare is not properly addressed between partners, the sudden rush of feel-good hormones experienced during sex turns into a humiliating crash just seconds later.

Aftercare is not limited to people in serious entanglements—it is simply an extension of sex itself. To show that you care about the person who just saw you naked and heard you growl (you know who you are). It doesn’t matter if you’re friends with benefits, in a long-term relationship, a one-night-stand, or married;

aftercare must be a priority.

The hookup culture the current generation prides itself on may find this notion of aftercare unnecessary because “it’s just a casual thing,” but the intensity of sexual encounters can sneak up on a person as fast as a guy finishes. While some encounters arguably don’t need beyond the bang-and-bolt, that is certainly not true for every instance of “casual sex.”

Underlying feelings of shame can flood to the surface in a blink of an eye, and while sex in itself is not by any means shameful, it’s important to forestall that unwanted feeling by engaging in aftercare regardless of the situation.

The bottom line is ensuring everyone is cared for with respect and tenderness. For most people, memories of sexual experiences don’t vanish into thin air when the cum is cleaned up and you’ve shut the door on your way out. You should be leaving any sexual experience feeling good about yourself.

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Is it worth jumping ship from Twitter?

Ryan Forgosh
Beacon Staff

Elon Musk acquired Twitter on Oct. 27 and promptly got to work setting it on fire.

With the hellscape that is Twitter now burning to the ground—and around 3,000 remaining employees working to put out Musk’s fire—people have been flying out of the bird app to find a new social media platform to nest in. Whether it be the 6-year-old Mastodon finally getting the attention it’s craved, the brand new Hive Social run by merely three people, or the resurgence of fan-favorite Tumblr, the question remains: are any of these alternatives actually better than Twitter? Is it even worth roosting elsewhere?

Unfortunately for the Musk-antis (myself included), these alternative platforms, while promising, don’t have the foundation needed to compete against Twitter. Each alternative platform brings its own issues, and each one is less-than-ideal when compared to Twitter. If Twitter goes under tomorrow, we will ultimately be left with several platforms each offering distinct reasons for use, but no single end-all-be-all social media service.

Mastodon was one of the first alternatives introduced after Musk’s purchase, but it’s been around since 2016. Mastodon’s big selling point is that it’s open source—allowing anyone to view the code and make modifications, so a user isn’t locked into just what the company and its coders want them to do. This open-source code, however, is both the appeal and the biggest problem with Mastodon.

Most people don’t know exactly what a “free open-source code” is, or how it affects a social platform. Unless the user’s already in the know, those words mean absolutely nothing. The common person prioritizes user experience, which suffers because of the open-source nature of Mastodon.

Mastodon is not a centralized platform, but rather a collection of “instances,” or personal spaces coded by users. These instances work as different servers that a user can host, post within, and prod others to join. Instead of simply posting on Mastodon, users post on a server hosted

by Mastodon.

To post on Twitter, a user goes to the app or webpage, creates an account using a phone number or email address, then tweets to their heart’s content.

For Mastodon, a user must likewise create an account—on Mastodon’s home site. Like it says on the sign-up page, Mastodon is not a single website. Users must choose an instance to make an account on. You might be asking yourself, “Okay, so where do I find a server?” That is an excellent question without an easy

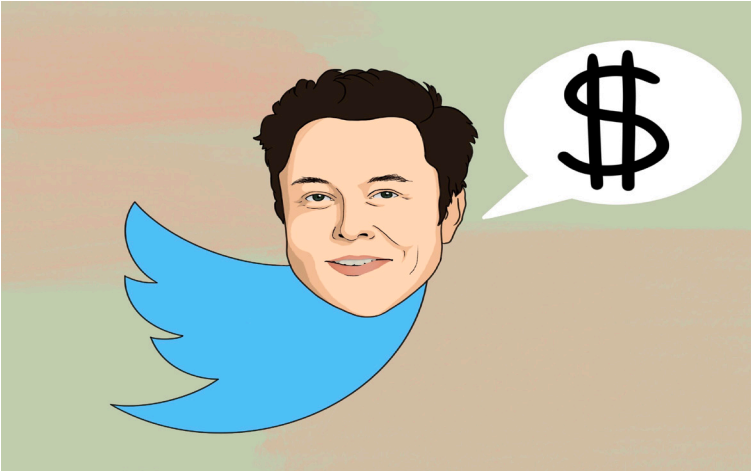


Illustration Ryan Yau

answer. Users can browse servers while creating an account, but that’s generally a crapshoot when it comes to finding a server that will suit an individual’s desires. The best way to create an account is to already know a server that the user would like to join from the start. But how are they supposed to know that? This is their first time signing up for an account!

This once again presents the problem with Mastodon being a platform that primarily caters to people who are already familiar with it. How else is anyone supposed to know what instances the people they want to interact with are on? Or how Mastodon’s system even works? And how can a user ensure that they don’t accidentally wind up on a neo-Nazi server? (Oh yeah, Mastodon also has a huge neo-Nazi population.)

In 2019, the largest instance on Mastodon was Gab, a server with virtually no moderation to which the far right

crowd to congregate.

Mastodon founder Eugen Rochko told Time Magazine, “[Mastodon is] kind of like cars. Cars are used by everyone, even bad people, even for bad purposes, there’s nothing you can do about it, because the tool is out there.”

That’s all well and good, but cars aren’t used to spread hateful rhetoric. Speech without restriction is Mastodon’s entire platform.

Okay, so Mastodon isn’t the social media platform to replace Twitter. Speaking of, let’s see how Twitter is doing. Oh, advertisers are pulling out from the platform? Sounds about right.

Well, there’s always Hive Social, the new kid in the race. Hive Social, or Hive, is much simpler than Mastodon. It’s essentially a copy of Twitter (sans Elon Musk baggage) with a bit of MySpace and Instagram sprinkled in.

Like Twitter, Hive users can post text

and images on the app, but if they head over to the search page, they can see photos from accounts they don’t follow—both trending and recommended—much like Instagram’s search page. Users can also attach songs to their profiles—a feature reminiscent of MySpace.

This sounds great on paper—until a user tries to actually use the app. After opening, it takes 25 full seconds for Hive to load posts. (For comparison, it took Twitter less than three seconds.) Why is this?

Launched in 2019, Hive is run by just three people and is still in its infancy compared to Twitter, which made its debut in 2006. To make matters worse, the Android version of the app—the version I use—is still in early access, meaning I can’t yet set a song to my profile.

The biggest problem with Hive is that it lacks a web browser version. Companies and organizations utilize the web version of Twitter to tweet for marketing and communication, so without this, Hive just doesn’t have the same reach as Twitter.

This brings us to the legacy social media, Meta’s apps, Facebook and Instagram, and Tumblr. But before we address those, let’s check in on Twitter! Oh, Apple is threatening to remove the app from the App Store? Noted.

The biggest problem with Facebook and Instagram is the same problem Twitter currently faces: its tyrannical ownership and moderation policies. Facebook is well-known for propagating hate speech and factually inaccurate news. So why switch from Twitter to Facebook if they share similar issues? Chances are if a user’s not a fan of Musk, Mark Zuckerberg isn’t their cup of tea either. And photo-heavy Instagram just doesn’t fulfill the same niche as Twitter, which includes more text and multimedia.

And finally, we have Tumblr. Tumblr had a mass exodus in 2018 when the company banned explicit content on the platform, including Not Safe For Work art that centered aesthetically complex nude drawings that previously thrived on the app.

“We now welcome a broader range of expression, creativity, and art on Tumblr,

including content depicting the human form (yes, that includes the naked human form),” the company said in a blogpost on Nov. 1.

Does Tumblr’s decision-reversal warrant a return? Or at least, a migration of Twitter users? It’s a well-established platform with a large and inclusive userbase. Although Tumblr’s issues are similar to Mastodon’s—with a large portion of the userbase being insiders to similar fandoms, albeit without the moderation issues—it’s much easier to use and understand.

What’s the catch, then? In terms of it being a stable platform, there isn’t one. However, Tumblr is stigmatized. It’s known for its large population of “stans,” or obsessive fans of content including Sherlock, Doctor Who, and K-pop.

While this isn’t an issue with the platform (in fact, Tumblr tends to lean into this) it does create a stigma for its users. Twitter has a large population of users who rely on the platform for their businesses, and while businesses could thrive on Tumblr, this stigma could be problematic.

Tumblr’s population has not fully recovered from the 2018 exodus, so although it is on the rise again with around 135 million monthly active users as of November, its userbase still pales in comparison to Twitter’s over 430 million monthly active users.

So, which social media platform will replace Twitter? None of them—yet.

Each alternative to Twitter has its own issues that makes it a less-than-worthwhile option. Mastodon’s entire selling point is also its downfall. Hive Social is just too new. Facebook is Facebook, and its sister app, Instagram, is too different. That leaves Tumblr, whose focus is far different from Twitter’s.

Until Musk’s fire is just ash, it seems Twitter may still be the de facto social media platform. But competition appeared seemingly overnight to challenge Twitter’s chokehold on the market, and there is a very real possibility of a new platform—maybe one of the aforementioned ones—dethroning Twitter.

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“The Great British Bake Off” isn’t the same

Roma Welsh
Beacon Staff

On Friday night, Oct. 4, 2022, I had to face the music: “The Great British Bake Off” isn’t the same.

The episode started like any other. To an average viewer, the show would most likely seem the same. Why wouldn’t it? The show’s structure had not changed. Even in the most recent season, there is still a signature, technical, and show-stopping bake-off round. The bakers tent is as well lit, the music just as cheery.

But, a seasoned fan could hear a dissonant twang within the score. The saturation of the decorative flowers, which used to jump through the screen, now seep out of the sides like the soggy bottom of an underbaked tart.

Episode 4 of Season 13, “Mexican Week,” crept forward. The show’s tone was set with an opening joke from “The Great British Bake Off” hosts Matt and Noel, who implied Mexico wasn’t a real place.

I often struggle to convey to people who haven’t experienced the disappointment that accompanies the discovery that a celebrity I love or a piece of media that inspires me, has been exposed as problematic.

To be fair, I know why such a high level of passionate commitment to a piece of media seems foreign. The routine cycle of discovery and disappointment that plagues anyone with an interest in any piece of media can begin to feel draining—and typical—that even I find it difficult not to resign myself to apathetic detachment.

At the end of the day, whatever celebrity scandal is going on barely affects my everyday life. Still, an ignorant choice made by a show that has grown alongside me feels like a betrayal of trust from a close friend.

I apprehensively continued to watch—

and finish—”The Bake Off’s” latest episode. By the end, I had successfully wasted an hour of my time watching an old, white, British man yell at young bakers for incorrectly making traditional Mexican desserts.

The episode offered a surplus of Noel and Matt’s typical attempt at “witty” humor, with their opening line only being a taste of the nasty impression they would leave on the episode as a whole. However, “Mexican Week’s” most egregious offenses were committed by “The Bake Off’s” main judge, Paul Hollywood.

A critically-acclaimed chef, Hollywood is “The Bake Off’s” most respected judge—and the aforementioned white guy. Mr. Hollywood could not bring himself to step down from his pedestal for even one episode to bring in a guest judge. At least then everyone watching would have been spared from Paul mutilating the core attributes of several cultural dishes.

My jaw dropped when I tuned into the episode. My quaint, little British baking show would never do something like this.

The show staring back at me was an exhausted bowl of empty calories. A shiny, sweet, and well-hidden misrepresentation of the original.

“The Great British Bake Show”—shortened to GBBO by the show’s fan base—is a baking competition that originally began airing on the BBC network on Aug. 17th, 2010. I began watching “The Great British Bake Off” on Netflix with my mom in 2015 and I have been watching annually since.

“The Great British Bake Off” managed to captivate American audiences through a 2014 Netflix deal. This slow-paced and quiet baking show with kind-hearted contestants was a stark contrast to the typical reality television baking competition shows a hungry viewer could find on the Food Network at the time.

One of the Food Network’s most

well known programs, “Hell’s Kitchen” was oozing with the drama of American trash television. The show’s noisy editing would leave audiences dizzy from jump cuts. The anger of an attention-starved chef testimonial was as integral to the show’s existence as the cooking segments.

In contrast, “The Great British Bake Off” had long and peaceful shots. Their interviews let you know, care, and root



Illustration Ryan Yau

for each contestant. The baker’s passion for their craft was infectious which rendered the competitive aspect of the show only a fragment of its appeal. The show’s vernacular was sweet and kind; it allowed American viewers to relax and it made me smile.

“The Bake Off,” however, was doomed from the moment it became part of the routine of American viewers.

The Netflix deal that introduced so many American viewers to “The Bake Off” inadvertently created a new show. Due to a copyright issue involving The Pillsbury Company, “The Bake Off’s” name had to be changed on Netflix’s catalog when broadcast in America. “The Great British Baking Off” was renamed “The Great British Baking Show.”

While those in the UK still knew the show as “The Bake Off,” Americans saw the rapidly approaching shift in tone the show would undergo in a more tangible way. Essentially, American audiences were seeing a new show, “The Great British Bake Off/Show.”

“The Great British Bake Off/ Show” can be altered by production changes. This example may seem small, especial-

ly if it is approached with an American mindset toward consuming media. A copyright issue and an infringement on the freedom of creative expression? That’s to be expected!

But, for “The Bake Off/Show,” this first major change established the show’s relationship with its new American audience. The moment an American audience accessed the program, “The Bake Off/Show” seeped into American culture and all its baggage.

This baggage sets “The Bake Off/Show” on an American stage, where the tone is tainted by our anxieties and fears. The niche American demand for nastiness was reflected in the show’s hosts, and its entire atmosphere. Noel and Matt often fall back on easy insults and were never

able to grasp the earnest empathy of their predecessors, Sue and Mel, who left the show in 2016.

Sue and Mel left “The Great British Bake Off” when the show had to move networks due to a financial disagreement between the show’s production company, Love Productions, and the BBC network. Out of loyalty to the BBC programming, almost all the original show’s cast members denied their new pay and left “The Bake Off.”

Except for Paul Hollywood. The only scrap of familiarity left for “The Bake Off/Show” to form its identity around is a man who represents a commitment to greed and corporate sponsored apathy—the same ideals that were eating my favorite show from the inside out. The more internal corruption “The Bake Off/Show” faced, the more it adapted into American homes. By the time I recognized it, the show I fell in love with was nowhere to be seen.

In its place was Episode 4 of Season 13, an episode dressed up in frilly music and colorful fondant where “The Great British Bake Off/Show” insensitively and ignorantly mocks Mexican culture. A tired gimmick extending from an empty shell.

It is this episode of “The Great British Bake Off/Show” that made me feel cheated for ever loving it. The cycle of discovery and disappointment “The Bake Off/Show” was slipping was not a sudden betrayal. It felt like I finally realized the distance between me and an old friend. The conversation is halted and awkward, even though I desperately want us to slip into our old dynamic.

But, “The Great British Bake Off/Show” is different. I can’t attempt to hold onto the scraps of the show’s soul now that it’s gone.

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Living Arts

Cantab Lounge keeps Boston poetry scene alive

Sasha Zirin
Beacon Staff

Performance poetry is a social art form that can involve encouraging community.

At the Cantab Lounge in Cambridge, Emerson alum Myles Taylor '19 runs weekly poetry events with long-time poet Dawn Gabriel.

The Cantab Lounge began hosting comedy shows, slam poetry, bluegrass music nights, and nightly live music in 1938. The lounge plays a substantial role in Boston's history of art, culture, and community. It closed because of COVID-19 and was put up for sale in July 2020, according to Eater Boston. However, Cantab Lounge reopened when new owner Tim Dibble bought the place in the summer of 2021.

The Cantab has brought members of the Boston community together for many decades, and its new management is dedicated to conserving that. According to Taylor, ticket prices and refreshment costs have remained the same amid inflation.

As of Dec. 7, Cantab's poetry nights are 21 and over due to the distribution of alcohol. Gabriel said that there are strong efforts to establish all-ages events, possibly at the Democracy Center in Cambridge.

Gabriel mentioned that COVID-19 and the long term hiatus of the National Poetry Slam—a large-scale performance poetry



Courtesy Kye Hamilton

competition—were huge blows to the Boston poetry scene, but said it is “coming back together slowly but surely.”

During the pandemic, the poetry community of Boston didn't waver. Taylor said that after the poetry events' reopening, a large, loyal group of regulars quickly reformed.

Taylor said that prior to the restarting of the events, people asked Cantab's management every day for the poetry slam on Wednesday nights.

The events now are reminiscent of Boston Poetry Slam's impact on the Cantab and the Boston poetry

community. The BPS is an organization at the core of Boston's poetry scene since 1991, but shut down during the pandemic. Prior to this, the BPS held weekly events at the Cantab since the 90s.

Taylor and Gabriel revitalized BPS through their events at the Cantab. They are currently working on accessing BPS's website and social media.

After the Cantab reopened, members of the Boston community wanted the historic poetry nights to return.

“The Cantab reached out to a few regulars [asking if they] want to run

poetry again because people asked every day for the poetry slam on Wednesday nights,” Taylor said.

Gabriel, who has been attending the Cantab since the 1990s, stepped up. Now, she and Taylor are co-producers of these poetry nights. Gabriel did so because of how important she finds the events to be.

“You walk in and there's community almost immediately,” Gabriel said. “You perform and people support you. It's like a warm embrace.”

Gabriel explains that running the Cantab events feels like giving back to what has deeply empowered her: poetry.

“Poetry lifted me up when I was very low, [helped me] find myself and my voice,” Gabriel said. “It's an outlet and it's amazing—it was here for me.”

The weekly poetry events cost \$3 and nearly always sell out, according to Taylor. The nights consist of a 20-person open mic followed by performances from the event staff, and each night ends with a slam. Some nights are themed or feature guest poets.

The weekly event always brings a packed house of people who often-times know one another, and go wild when their friend steps on stage.

People come alone, or with groups, many of whom hold notebooks and write poems in them. The audience encourages fellow poets with snaps and cheers.

“[In poetry,] the art is maybe sec-

ondary to the community,” Taylor said. “It's easy to make connections due to [poetry's] nature of being personal, being intimate. It's like skipping the small talk.”

Taylor said his love of performance poetry and the community he found within it began at Emerson.

“I've been slamming since I got to Emerson, which was in 2015,” Taylor said. “Emerson Poetry Project truly saved my life in a significant way. It got me to where I was—I would not be here doing this if not for it.”

Poetry communities like Emerson Poetry Project tend to be places that lack judgment and foster people's love for poetry. Poetry nights at Cantab work to reinforce that value.

“You can start here,” Gabriel said. “It feels comfortable, there's a friendly vibe that the leadership team tries to establish. You don't need an MFA, you just need something you scribbled down in a notebook.”

Taylor said poetry as a culture is held up by people, for people. Through performance, camaraderie is found.

“With the more experience you get from hearing experiences other than yours, [you] make connections through art to learn and then grow and [create] communities,” Taylor said.

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A gothic cosmic neo-giallo set in Boston

Cont. from Pg. 1

The duo is creatively like-minded, so co-directing went swimmingly. Each benefited from the extra help.

“Directing requires you to be doing a lot of things pretty quickly,” Compton said. “With two people, we could easily split between one person working with the actors and one person working with the camera. We never really hit any bumps with that.”

Shooting began in September. The directors shot the film in various Boston locations—Trinity Church, Beacon Hill, and Andrews Park, among others. They deliberately chose places with gothic architecture to evoke an anachronistic feel.

In this sense, “The Five Fingers of a Dog” can be seen as a Boston film. The duo was in part inspired by Lucio Fulci's “The New York Ripper,” a giallo about a sadistic murderer based in New York.

“It's unrealistic, but very hon-



Courtesy Grant Morris

est,” Compton said of “The New York Ripper.” “It's brutally honest in the way that they're willing to show the worst of the worst these places have to offer.”

Likewise, Compton and Landsman show the worst of the worst in Boston—starting with the MBTA. One cut uses the Green Line's deafening arrival screech to startle the audience, a fun Easter egg for those who take the infamous train.

“The Green Line is freaky,” Compton said. “It's an old and decrepit system that is not updated because it's underground—it has the feeling we're going for in terms of this desolate place that still exists.”

The environment of the film was designed to create an atmosphere of cosmic horror. Background extras are nowhere to be found and the outdoors are shrouded in blackness. The characters of the film feel very much alone in an enclosed world.

“It doesn't feel like our world exactly,” Landsman said. “We wanted it to feel like a nightmare, with the kind of logic that comes with a nightmare, and the way that these spaces affect those inhabiting them.”

Since the film was an independent production, Compton and Landsman secured funds independently—largely a GoFundMe campaign, plus their own pockets.

With a \$2,500 budget, they embraced the aesthetic of low-budget horror.

“We didn't try to fight it at all,” Compton said of the budget. “We knew what we could accomplish and wanted to really use the aesthetic that we had available to us.”

Compton and Landsman strove to replicate the characteristic look of giallo—in no small part defined by its distinctive blood effect.

Giallo blood is lurid red, milk-like in texture, and sprays out of wounds with incredible capacity and velocity. The duo mimicked this style with acrylic paints, straying from realism for a more visceral effect.

“The feeling of it is the most important,” Compton said. “So with the gore, we wanted to make it as impactful as possible without the budget or preparation that we'd otherwise need.”

Compton and Landsman are big practical effects enthusiasts—they cite body horror luminary David Cronenberg as one of their greatest influences. Even on a limited budget, they found creative ways to achieve effective gore.

For viscera, much of what they needed was in the supermarket. They drew from an eclectic source of foodstuffs—ground beef, pizza dough, peppers, twizzlers, anything that could pass as a human innard.

“Giving the actors something to actually react to is a huge part of it for us,” Landsman said. “Having real grounded textures that they can interact with lets us get an authentic performance out of it.”

“We feel very much that making a movie is about creating something real and capturing it for that moment,” Compton added.

Creating “The Five Fingers of a Dog” was a year-long process. Compton and Landsman finalized editing at the end of their sophomore year and started distribution by the beginning of the next semester.

The film screened twice at Emerson—at the Student Performance Center and at the Bright Family Screening Room. Currently, Compton and Landsman are in the process of submitting the film to mainly horror-centric festivals.

Compton and Landsman were



Film poster for “The Five Fingers of a Dog” / Courtesy Charlie Compton

pleased with the audience's reaction to the film—the packed SPC screening was an emotional space. Viewers laughed at comedic beats and moments of discomfort, and overwhelmingly left the theater disturbed.

“We are definitely under the school of thought that cinema is a medium of raw, visceral emo-

tions,” Landsman said. “It's an emotional experience from visuals and sound, and horror is the most extreme of that.”

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Blue Men blew up Charles Playhouse

Mariyam Quaisar
Beacon Staff

Blue Man Group seamlessly encompasses comedic acts and thrilling music to create the perfect viewer experience. From performers banging on drums puddled with wet paint to catching 30 marshmallows in their mouth, this show surpasses average entertainment and pushes audience members into a world of charisma.

As soon as the lights dimmed on Nov. 12 at the Charles Playhouse, and the three Blue Men took the stage, the crowd cheered and clapped in contagious excitement. Each Blue Man was visible by a shadow through a screen as they alternated drumming and staring out at the audience. Above them was a hidden band, clad in neon masks and bodysuits, playing catchy instrumentals.

Throughout the show, each Blue Man’s persona shined during their performances. They kept the audience engaged and laughing, and

for them—you want to write it just enough that the audience member puts themself in it, then they personalize it,” said Jason McLin, the longest serving Blue Man in the current Boston cast.

McLin began his journey as a Blue Man in 2002 in Chicago, and since then has performed in several markets, including Las Vegas and Toronto.

“[Blue Man] has accompanied me through all these changes in my life,” said McLin. “Its impact is immeasurable, its influence in my life is everywhere.”

The Blue Man show has an irreversible impact on the lives of its performers, and a whole other effect on the experiences of the younger audience members in attendance.

“It was so cool!” said seven-year-old Louis Thatcher with wide eyes and a big smile. “I really liked when he caught all those marshmallows in his mouth.”

William Thatcher, Louis’s father, said this was their third Blue

Man show because it’s perfect for not only kids, but also adults. Their comedic acts aren’t limited to a certain age group, he said, which makes the show all the more inviting.

Embodiment of the character, however, requires a mindset trained on how this blue, neutral character can act on stage with the environment that is created. Even though rehearsals precede each show, the performers’ acts combine rehearsed bits with audience reactions and their fellow performers’ reactions to the audience. Each Blue Man’s handle on creativity is tested as every new addition to the crowd brings another path to a nonverbal punchline.

Beyond that, writing the scenes for the characters and anticipating their actions will play out in each unique show comes with its own critical thinking.

“The content comes out of this core character that embodies different archetypes, and we plunk this character into a circumstance—what does it discover out of this world? That’s what drives

the content creation,” said McLin. “If we’re experiencing such and such, how will this character respond to that?”

This concept of relating the blue character to modern day culture trends dates back to when the Blue Man group was formed in 1987, a time in American history that is known for the rise of wealth and capitalism. That context informed the first writings of the Blue Man Group shows.

“The first iterations of the show were very much a commentary on the culture of that time—wall street is soaring, and wealth inequality is getting worse and worse,” said McLin. “So [even today], there definitely is commentary about pushing back against the status quo—is this how we want to be living?”

Through verbal silence and music that sends vibrations through audience members’ seats, the Blue Man Group creates passionate performances of all shapes, sizes, and colors. A defining characteristic of the show’s success comes from crowd reactions—namely, a crowd filled with people of all demographics.

The Charles Playhouse was filled with young kids, older siblings, parents, grandparents—you name it. What makes this show unique is how it appeals to people regardless of age, and rather makes a point to let each audience



Courtesy Lindsey Best

member interpret the performance in their own way.

“This question of how do you push back in your life is such a wide question that when someone’s in undergraduate—how are they asking themselves that question—and when someone who is in midlife with kids, they are asking themselves that same question,” said McLin. “That’s what’s unique to Blue Man: how they answer it.”

The best part of the show: hearing a seven-year-old laugh so hard it makes you want to laugh along with them. Watching the Blue Men act on whims and let their personalities shine through their antics was as natural as it comes, and that’s what brought the biggest smiles on audience members’ faces.

“My mouth hurts from laughing so much, and this happens every time I watch this show,” said Cindy Gatlin, 27, a fifth-time Blue Man audience member. “I love it.”

The lighting effects, fog machines, and red and yellow paint flying across the stage made the show the theatrical performance it was, but the talents and personas of the Blue Men filled the hearts of each viewer—and that is what makes the show.

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Rupi Kaur’s world tour is an avalanche of sincerity

Clara Faulkner
Beacon Staff

Tremont Street was packed with people bearing gowns and glamor for poet and renowned feminist figure Rupi Kaur, who delivered a performance like no other at the Wang Theatre’s Boch Center on Dec. 6.

“Rupi Kaur: World Tour” is a showcase of Kaur’s undiscovered works and a collection of fan-favorite poetry complete with original music and projections. Through words and line drawings crafted with profound feelings, her work investigates love, mental health, trauma, and the development of femininity.

Kaur is well-known for her poetic internet sensation “Milk and Honey.” The book took Instagram by storm after Kaur began posting her free verse poetry on Instagram in 2013.

Aside from her first self-published poetry release, Kaur has released three books to date titled “The Sun and Her Flowers,” “Home Body,” and “Healing Through Words.” These books have collectively sold more than 11 million copies, and have been translated into over 43 languages.

Kaur writes in lowercase — a personal homage to her native Gurmukhi script. On Tuesday, she read poems from her publications, although most of the show featured unreleased work.

Her books are oriented toward the women’s empowerment movement, and her performance did not fall shy of her ambition to accredit women for their successes. Almost the entire audience was composed of women, whose response to Kaur’s feminist poetry was overwhelming. Her chosen poetry painted a picture of the contemporary woman as heroine.

Kaur emphasizes women’s propensity for self-deprecation.

Her spoken words “I found that there were no roots more intimate than those of a mind and a body that have decided to be full” aptly captured the spirit of her emphasis on the significance of psychological well-being.

Motivated by her experience in therapy, she drew the charming analogy of speed dating to locate a competent therapist.

Her voice both silenced the theater and set it off in raucous laughter. Throughout the course of the performance, Kaur cracked jokes about disastrous dates and bound them to the bedrock of womanhood, helping the audience connect via shared experiences and highlighting Kaur’s focus on the necessity of spoken word.

The mix of spoken word and produced music made me feel as if I were listening to a soundtrack I didn’t want to finish. There was a jubilation in the atmosphere as art and poetry were interwoven. It was an unforgettable performance. Kaur shared with the crowd that she told her team she wanted to bring something distinctive to the audience during her tour, and she delivered.

Kaur’s production was not only compelling because it dealt with universal trauma, but also because she used intimate anecdotes to make the audience feel like they really understood her.

Kaur addressed the male audience members, saying their attendance was testimony that there are decent men on the planet. She then told a related tale of a man she knows in the literary sector who said that childbirth was the most difficult experience of his life, despite the fact that he would not physically experience it. This narrative elicited an avalanche of sincerity and a link to the familiar misogyny wom-



Graphic Clara Faulkner

en face today.

Kaur proved capable of transforming her performance into a deep dive into the history of patriarchy.

The performer also shared her struggles with dating, attaining unconditional love, and being a cultural advocate in a discriminatory society.

Kaur explained the discrimination she faced entering the literary sector in a recent interview with “The Times of India.”

“I was a 20-year-old, young, brown, Punjabi Sikh woman from a working-class immigrant family who didn’t grow up with much financial resources,” she said. “So what did I care what the literary community thought of me?”

Kaur draws parallels between her desire to overcome writer’s block and satisfy corporate expectations for additional poet-

ry book releases.

She said in the performance that living out her passion comes at the price of being away from home on tour and missing her friends.

Kaur’s delivery was ardent, and it was evident that she was portraying who she was as a poet and a woman of Punjab through her writings. She rose to prominence as not only both a woman and poet, but also as an advocate for neglected voices.

When revealing her struggle with the anxiety that comes with guilt of achievement as an immigrant, the poems began to spill out of her, extending serenity throughout the audience.

In her work, the poet makes it crystal clear that she aims to integrate social concerns with her writings by raising subjects

like the Iranian women’s liberation movement and misogyny in the 21st century.

Kaur explained the importance of seeing portrayals of Indian woman authors like herself flourishing in the U.S — demonstrating how much she intends to weave her own Punjab culture into her poetry.

It was exciting to see a gifted writer like Kaur striving to use her platform to capture the crowd by incorporating it into her show. The performance renewed my interest in spoken word poetry.

Kaur has raised the bar for female poets and writers worldwide by presenting a performance that captivated both minds and hearts while highlighting social issues, rom-com scenarios, and cultural impact.

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Sports

Senior spotlights: Women’s soccer seniors made history with balanced culture, united drive

Leo Kagan
Beacon Staff

Resilient, decorated, momentous, and victorious. This year, the Emerson women’s soccer team represented the purple and gold in a light it hadn’t shined before.

Boasting the conference’s Coaching Staff of the Year and Co-Defensive Player of the Year, the program’s first All-American player, and the NEWMAC championship, the Lions were dominant all over the pitch.

Though players hoped to extend their season a little longer after falling 2-1 to Westfield State in the first round of the NCAA Division III tournament, they can hang their cleats on a truly historic season.

Continuing a series of stories highlighting each fall sports team’s seniors, The Beacon conducted interviews with the players and coaching staff from the women’s soccer team to determine how the Lions’ seniors propelled them to a season like no other.

Hannah Beck - Defender

This season was Beck’s fifth playing for the Lions, using her first year as a graduate student to make up for a year lost to COVID. She brought a positive attitude and hard work to every shift she spent in the backfield.

Though she only scored one career goal, it was an important one—the game-winning goal in the team’s final regular season game against Springfield, securing the Lions’ third-place slot in the conference and a home playoff game. Sophomore midfielder Lauren Carlson said the team found joy and motivation in the goal, which spurred them through a successful playoff run.

“HannahBeckscored,thestarsaligned, and we won the NEWMAC,” she said.

Beck was particularly fond of a pair of socks decorated with rapper Pitbull’s face, wearing them at the Springfield game. Carlson said they became a lucky charm for the Lions.

“She wore her Pitbull socks throughout the tournament,” she said. “[Hannah] claimed that we won because of Pitbull.”

Marie Bou Aziz - Midfielder

Bou Aziz provided support in a tough area of the field and played a key role in the Lions’ midfield rotation. Though she capably chipped in on the offense—six career goals—first-year defender Presley King said her strength lies in her defense.

“Marie [is] one of the best defenders,” she said. “She’s very strong—she can body people off the ball. Her physicality makes her stand

out and her defending is amazing.”

Head Coach David Suvak said Bou Aziz served as a glue player, fighting injury and still showing up to work every day.

“She’s been a good teammate and a solid player,” he said. “[She] helped us grow as a group—a little injury prone this year, but still an important member of the team.”

Cali Bruce - Midfielder

Bruce is a special player. Her trophy case—which features a NEWMAC championship, three First Team All-Conference selections, and now an All-American selection too—is evidence enough. Her statline—8 goals, 5 assists, 21 points in 56 career games—supports this, too.

Bruce moved from defender to midfielder this season, changing her

making me feel welcome,” King said.

“She’s definitely a mentor for me.”

Bruce will be missed next year, both for her on-the-field skills and for her ability to foster team cohesion.

“She led the team in a way that helped us play competitively but kept the players joined together,” Suvak said. “She did an excellent job of keeping the team tight.”

Ainslee MacQuarrie - Midfielder

MacQuarrie too, shifted positions for part of the season, moving from the midfield to outside forward briefly. Carlson said her brain and skillset applied themselves well to the new position.

“She had some key moments, [some] amazing assists,” she said. “Midfield is a key passing position, but to take what she learned and apply it to outside forward isn’t easy.”

Josephine Mazza - Defender

Mazza, known as Jojo by her teammates, suffered an injury before the season started and spent the year on the bench. Her injury, Suvak said, rarely stopped her from taking an active role in team leadership.

“It was important for me to have her be a part of this team,” he said. “She offered guidance and support to players on the sidelines, [and] has been willing to speak to the coaching staff to offer ideas and suggestions.”

King said despite never seeing her play, Mazza’s presence radiated from the sidelines.

“You can tell when she was out there, she was a force to be reckoned with,” she said. “She can lead the team and she’s not even playing.”

“Somehow all of the chaos comes together for her,” she said. “[She’s] an amazing outside back—she just pulls it all together. She has a lot of fire, a lot of personality, and she brings it to the field.”

Suter also played an important role in cultivating a welcoming team environment.

“She’s very important for our culture,” Carlson said. “She’s one of the first people I started talking to when I was a freshman, and she was really welcoming. I know historically, the team wasn’t always like that. Seniors [like her] helped us build that culture.”

King said Suter’s relaxed and friendly demeanor made it easy to feel comfortable, even as a first-year.

“It’s easy to put the seniors on a pedestal—they’re older and really good at soccer—but she’s personable and real,” King said. “She talks to you like you’ve been her friend for years.”

Class of 2023 (and graduate student)

Very few graduating senior classes go out winning their last game. Though the current class dropped its first NCAA matchup, they went undefeated in the NEWMAC postseason—something no other iteration of the Emerson women’s soccer team can claim.

While players and coaches remember the championship and other individual honors bestowed upon them, they also remember the culture fostered by the graduating class. Carlson said it was a unique challenge the seniors handled gracefully.

“It’s easy when you have a group, to get angry at each other, to have cliques, to not get along,” she said. “But the seniors this year set the precedent—‘That’s not how this team is going to be.’ We would play teams that were better, but there was never a team that had more love for each other than us.”

King said she admired most their drive to succeed, which brought them all the way to a championship.

“They were all hardworking, driven players,” she said. “Sometimes, groups of seniors can get a little checked out because they’re so close to graduating, but everybody put everything they had on the field. You could tell how big a part of their lives soccer was.”

That chapter is now closed for most of these seniors, though all are eligible to return next fall for a graduate year if they so choose. While they were Lions, though, they made history on a run like no other.

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Senior Cali Bruce holding NEWMAC trophy. Photo / Arthur Mansavage

game to fit the needs of the team. She served as captain for two years, complementing her strong play with leadership. Carlson said her most impressive talent is her ability to motivate others to their highest potential.

“I would usually go up against Cali in practice,” she said. “She challenged me to be the best possible version of myself. She’s also very difficult to mark because she’s skillful on the ball [and] she doesn’t back down from anything.”

King said Bruce’s leadership skills helped her adjust to life at Emerson.

“When I first got there, she was having conversations with me, asking how I was adjusting, checking in and

On top of her four career goals, Suvak praised MacQuarrie’s vision and ball-moving abilities as her most impactful skills.

“She is very good at driving left to right and making splitting passes as she’s running across the top of the box,” he said. “She has no problems holding onto the ball under pressure. [She’s] more of a playmaker, an assist-giver.”

Carlson added that MacQuarrie’s positivity proved integral to staying focused and relaxed, on and off the field.

“She’s such a positive [person],” she said. “She’s very uplifting and a big part of the team culture. She keeps things positive and neutral on the field.”

Carlson added that Mazza displayed refreshing honesty, which motivated the squad.

“She’s very real,” she said. “She will tell you if something’s not working but also she’s very aware of calling people out for good things. She’s not afraid to say it—she calls people out for how hard they work.”

Bellamy Suter - Defender

Suter showed her reliability from the backend over a four-year career, starting in 35 of the 50 games she played. She tallied just one career goal, but teammates admired her more for her defensive prowess—Carlson said she played especially well under pressure.

Houston sets new season high, scores 33 points



Graduate guard Jarred Houston makes a layup. Beacon Archives

Cont. from Pg. 1

shot for shot on ensuing possessions, as the first-year guard tallied his 18th point with a jumper at the five-minute mark.

The lead held up for the Lions as they captured the 80-72 victory off the back of two double-digit performances. Houston stuffed the stat sheet with 24 points, nine rebounds, eight blocks

and six assists. McNamara tallied 18 points along with five rebounds and three assists; Beckwith finished with 15 points, five rebounds and one assist; and Coman had his third consecutive double-digit game with 11 points.

Head coach Bill Curley said Martin and McNamara were catalysts for the team’s energy.

“Nate and B-Mac got off to a great

start with how aggressive they were in our zone [defense]. [They] really brought a lot of energy, and the other guys picked up off of that,” he said.

Saturday’s performance was McNamara’s second consecutive game, tallying 18 points as the first-year impacted the team.

“My teammates are giving me a lot of confidence and [I’m] just putting in work,” McNamara said. “It’s all in the preparation, day in and day out. I got guys encouraging me to be aggressive and get in the paint. I can look for my shot and then get guys other looks.”

Like B-Mac, Houston credited his performance with the team’s early paint touches.

“Guys look for me to make good entry passes into the post, and it was just my job to finish,” he said.

On top of a well-rounded performance, Curley also praised Coman’s basketball ability to read the situation on the court.

“He’s hitting shots, but more importantly, he knows when to take them and how to get to them,” he said. “He’s

not just shooting to shoot, he’s shooting to score and make our team better.”

Curley also praised the team’s effort despite its poor shooting night.

“In years past, if we weren’t making shots, we weren’t playing,” he said. “These guys are sticking with it and they’re still doing things even though they’re not scoring ... They’re not letting their lack of scoring define who they are as players.”

Curley noted improvements from his players from when the season started, but he said there is more to be done to reach their desired level of play.

“They’ve been consistent,” he said. “The thing they have to really do is understand what’s going on—have a little bit better understanding and vision out there of what teams are doing to us, what we’re trying to do and how to execute. Once we do that, I think they’ll be a really tough team to play against.”

The Lions extended their winning streak on Tuesday night, beating Salem State in a 89-86 in a match that came down to just one possession. Houston led the way

with a season-high 33 points, 13 rebounds, five blocks and four assists.

The poor shooting against the Lancers improved to 55% from the field and 58.3% from beyond the arc. Heading into the match, it was important to improve the offense and shoot more diligently.

“[We had] one bad shooting game, [but] water always evens out,” McNamara said. “There’s no reason not to have confidence in our shooting and ability to attack zones.”

The Lions’ record improved to 5-3 as they now prepare for the team’s Winter Break game against Wooster College in Winter Park, FL for the Steve Moore Sunshine Shootout on Dec. 19. The men’s basketball team is no stranger to playing away from the Bobbi, and they look to make the trip to Rollins College worth it.

“We love to be road dawgs, so we just have to handle our business [as] usual,” Houston added.

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